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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Report on the Steel Strike of 1919. Commission of Inquiry, Interchurch World Movement.

Public Opinion and the Steel Strike of 1919. Supplementary reports to the Commission of Inquiry, Interchurch World Movement.

The Three-Shift System in the Steel Industry. By HORACE B. DRURY. (Bulletin of Taylor Society, February, 1921.)

The steel-strike report of the Interchurch World Movement has already called forth a large volume of comment, and the merits and defects of its concrete subject-matter have been pretty thoroughly passed in review. The recent appearance, under the same auspices, of a volume entitled *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike of 1919* makes re-examination of this whole enterprise timely. An effort, at the same time sympathetic and critical, to give the report a setting and evaluation in relation to the general subject of scientific industrial research should be of some value. Considering the inquiry from this standpoint, the report by Professor Horace B. Drury on the three-shift system in the steel industry, to the Taylor Society, which appeared in the interval between the publication of the original Interchurch report and the supplementary volume, furnishes a valuable basis of comparison upon one of the chief subjects with which the Interchurch report was concerned.

The title of the Interchurch supplementary report, *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike*, is not accurately descriptive of the materials contained. The volume is made up largely of documents and inquiries upon which the original report was based, but these documents are organized in a way calculated to throw light upon various collateral phenomena that usually accompany labor disputes. It is brought out, for instance, that the newspapers, especially the Pittsburgh newspapers, did not give the public correct information concerning the strike; it is shown that the Pittsburgh pulpit was divided, but that the prevailing tendency was to see the conflict through the eyes of the employers; it is shown that the conflict was accompanied by unwarranted arrests, assaults, and police brutality, and that

freedom of speech and assembly are not safe-guarded in western Pennsylvania. One chapter, devoted to immigrant communities, develops the thesis that the steel areas are worlds by themselves, whose ideas and viewpoint are matters of complete ignorance in adjoining communities.

Another chapter is devoted to the welfare work of the United States Steel Corporation. The company is given credit for some excellent work and is criticized for some other features of its policy. All these matters are sufficiently familiar to persons who have paid attention to labor conflicts in the past or to the social and industrial problems that have attended the growth of the steel industry. On the whole, the supplementary volume is valuable for the light it throws on the original report, but it cannot be said to have developed a significant body of new thought in connection with collateral phases of strikes.

Considering the original report and the supplement together, it would appear that the architects' plan for the inquiry was drawn up in terms of a measured scientific investigation. In the process of construction the report became essentially an indictment. This outcome may have resulted from the kind of materials that came to light in the course of the inquiry, or it may have resulted from the training of the builders and the way they put their materials together. A careful reading of the report has brought the reviewer to the conclusion that both these influences affected the result.

Considering the volume as an indictment, the counts in it have to do with the general questions of wages, hours, and working conditions in the industry, and with the inadequate machinery for carrying on relations between employers and workers in reference to these conditions. Thoughtful people have long realized that the twelve-hour day, the seven-day week and some of the other circumstances connected with the steel manufacture are anachronisms. An investigator runs no risk of having his science questioned when he labels these conditions unwholesome.

In respect to the relations between employer and employee, there is no formula which can command such preponderance of support as the claim for wholesome working conditions. However, we find the President's Industrial Conference, the National Industrial Conference Board, the Merchant's Association of New York, and other conservative bodies a unit in proclaiming the necessity for some systematic channel through which to bring employee viewpoint and influence to bear in determining conditions of employment. This

being true, a body with a religious background, proceeding from the standpoint of serving human values in industry, can hardly fulfil the purpose of honest inquiry and omit to call emphatic attention to the failure of the steel industry to keep pace with conservative employer opinion, to say nothing of the opinion of other groups. The case is somewhat similar with reference to the way in which detective agencies are utilized.

Whether we call the report an investigation or an indictment, enlightened people will probably agree that the things criticized are on the whole things that ought to be criticized. Many will go farther and maintain that no document could deal honestly with this kind of subject-matter without revealing a measure of righteous indignation.

There are two sorts of inquiry into industrial relations of which the public has occasion to make use. One has to do with ascertaining, analyzing, and interpreting facts concerning industrial relations in particular industries and trades without reference to any particular controversy. The other is a matter of giving the public correct information concerning disputes when the conflict is on. The need for dependable and timely information about industrial conflicts is great. Reports to the public concerning them must select the main issues and present them in a way easily grasped, without too much detail, and without too great regard for the rules laid down in the research seminaries. From this latter standpoint the timeliness and comprehensiveness of the steel report gave it an important educational value; the general slant of the report, however, and its phraseology are not quite what the student of industrial relations looks for in a piece of scientific research. Students may sometimes be pedantic in these matters, but it is perhaps clear that research is as much a matter of atmosphere and setting as it is of training and method. Without reference to the training of investigators or their motives, the heat of an acute industrial conflict will seldom furnish a favorable setting for dispassionate research, and this was obviously a handicap under which the steel report labored.

In the long run, research is likely to achieve the most useful results when it is kept as distinct as possible from propaganda. However praiseworthy the ends toward which propaganda is directed, its educational function is essentially different from the function of research. Even if the enlightenment of the public on the issues of a particular conflict is entirely divorced from propaganda, that, too, is a different function from the function of research.

All in all, it is clear that the steel report served a useful purpose, useful in its timeliness, useful as an example of the possibilities of organized religion for commanding thoughtful attention both to the specific issue and to the more abstract question of industrial morality. The enterprise is one upon which the basis of judgment must be essentially different from that used in determining the value of a piece of purely scientific research. It is clear that this sort of inquiry should be classified in a different category from that kind of industrial research which has the dispassionate, perhaps even colorless, object of extending the bounds of human knowledge.

To qualify as business research, analysis of industrial relations in a highly complex industry must not only have regard to the social factors involved, but it must also take due cognizance of the economic, engineering, and business organization factors. From the standpoint of research the question of individual or group motives is important only in so far as it affects conclusions reached or the question of final solutions for problems analyzed.

Professor Drury's report on the three-shift system and the chapter on the twelve-hour day (chapter iii) in the Interchurch report are concerned with the same industrial situation. They arrive at substantially similar conclusions as to the desirability and feasibility of eliminating the twelve-hour day. The documents are not greatly different in length. There are one or two similar citations in them. In other respects they are entirely dissimilar. The data used in the Interchurch report are made up primarily of statements by individuals and references to public documents. As is perhaps natural, considering the auspices under which the report appeared, the question of human motives is in the foreground throughout the discussion. The Drury report is the work of a professor of economics and business organization who has a distinct social slant. His conclusions are set forth before a Society made up chiefly of progressive engineers. Nowhere in the report is the question of motives stressed. The report is eloquent in its social implications, but these come to the reader through suggestions; they are nowhere stated. The temper and method of the report are revealed in a brief abstract in which the conclusions reached are summed up in the following language:

At this time when many mills are laying off large numbers of men the question is being raised as to why any job need be 12 hours long. England has given up the 12-hour day in her steel industry, and so has France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Spain. There is no other large American industry which, like a steel plant, works the majority of its men 12 hours a day.

The writer has recently visited practically all of the some 20 American steel plants which are now running on three shifts. He has found that the men have been willing to make substantial concessions in daily wages in order to get the shorter hours. A 25 per cent increase in hourly rates is ample to compensate the men for a 4 hours' loss of pay. To give all the men now on 12-hour work a 25 per cent increase in wages and cut down their day from 12 to 8 hours, would cost a manufacturer of pig iron at the most about 21 cents a ton. Pig iron sells for \$40. If all the departments in a steel plant were to be changed from two to three shifts, the increase in total cost for the finished rail, bar, or plate could not, on the average, be more than about 3 per cent.

But the increase in cost need not be nearly so great as these figures. By taking care, some manufacturers going on 8 hours have been able to reduce their force of men 10 per cent—some, more. Others have found that the quality of their open-hearth steel has improved and that the expense for fuel and wear and tear on furnaces has been substantially reduced. Others have found that their rolling-mill output has gone up well toward 20 per cent, or even more.

The steel industry is not one in which output can easily be increased, and during the initial stages of three-shift operation most companies have had to stand some increase in labor cost, but, taking it all in all, the manufacturers now operating on the shorter day are practically a unit in saying that it means more satisfactory operations, and is better business. Many detailed problems have had to be worked out; but certainly the experience of these 20 plants have shown that there is no outstanding obstacle to putting the steel industry on a three-shift day.

Today conditions are more favorable for introducing the three-shift system than they were at the time when most of the plants now employing it made the change. With labor as abundant as at present, the expense of wage adjustments would unquestionably be less, and the increase in efficiency substantially greater, than was true in the case of the companies whose experience is discussed in this report.

If the present favorable opportunity is not seized, it is apt to mean greater expense when the steel industry does decide to go to three shifts, as it is almost certain to do before the lapse of very many years.

Inquiring into the economic, industrial, and psychological influences that have caused the persistence of the twelve-hour day notwithstanding the fact that it is not an industrial or a metallurgical necessity, Mr. Drury appears to consider inertia the dominant influence that has retarded change. After going into various industrial factors in the problem he has this to say: "So a condition has become general in which the managers choose to have on hand a fairly adequate number of men working at an intensity which permits

them to stay around for twelve hours." From the workers' angle he has this to say: "The steel industry has for many years recruited its workers from a class of men to whom this combination of long, sluggish hours with rather high weekly earnings has had particular charm."

Mr. Drury's analysis of the experience of different plants that have introduced the three-shift system, of the difficulties encountered and the way in which they have been overcome, is most detailed and painstaking, as is his analysis of the advantages to be gained from going to the three-shift system. He recognizes, however, that the problem of putting the whole steel industry on the three-shift system is different from the problem of a particular plant, due primarily to the greater difficulty of securing an increased labor supply. As above noted, he points out very strongly the urgency of utilizing the present period of slack demand and labor surplus for getting rid of this industrial anachronism.

The report does not confine itself to the general principles involved but goes into the details of planning the new rotations required for putting the branches of the industry concerned upon the three-shift system.

In conclusion it should be emphasized again that comparison between two works that proceed from such dissimilar viewpoints as the Drury report and the report of the Interchurch Movement would be obviously unfair unless this difference of viewpoint is fully recognized. The Drury report proceeds almost exclusively from a research concept, whereas the Interchurch report is primarily a document in which there is always back of the investigation the thought of immediate propaganda and public education. This in no sense discredits the objects sought in the Interchurch report nor detracts from the particular service the report rendered.

WILLARD E. HOTCHKISS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Railroad Valuation. By H. B. VANDERBLUE. Cambridge, 1920. Pp. 119.

This little volume contains a description and critical discussion of the valuation work of the Interstate Commerce Commission, up to the point at which tentative valuations had been served on fifty-five carriers and formal findings and orders as to the "basic facts" (not figures of "final value") published for the Texas Midland, Winston-Salem Southbound, and Kansas City Southern. The